



Poster promoting the first ever smoke-free South-East Asia games.

the exercise had also produced wider gains for public health. It reinforced existing tobacco control policies and put tobacco firmly on the agenda, not just in Vietnam, but in all 11 participating countries, whose ministers of health all received detailed information about it. Health officials spoke of excellent inter-agency cooperation and support, and significantly increased knowledge and awareness of the health effects of smoking over a wide ranging population. WHO provided some US\$30 500 for the implementation of the policy, making its success seem exceptional value for money, and enabling Vietnam to provide a valuable lead for others to follow.

## South Africa: courting success

When Ken Sheppard, possibly the only tobacco control advocate in the world to use a Rolls Royce in his work (see *Tobacco Control* 2000;9:131), first encountered the Mossel Bay Magistrates Court, it was a horror story of indiscriminate smoking. To Sheppard, who has filed many a pro-health case in the court, it seemed that every one of the several hundred people going about their business there was a smoker. The majority were those summonsed to answer various offences, but police officers, lawyers and members of the public were smoking, too. To even suggest making the court smoke-free seemed ludicrous.

By 2002, serious efforts were at last being made to isolate smokers into designated areas, but with little success. Sheppard and his Tobacco Control Centre argued that the only workable

solution was to make the court entirely smoke-free; and by 2003, it was. Court security personnel were instructed to order anyone smoking to either leave the building or extinguish their cigarettes immediately. Interestingly, some of the worst offenders and the last to hold out were police and court employees. With the interior now smoke-free, the smokers predictably gathered at the entrance, forming a smoky cloud through which non-smokers had to battle as they went in or out. At last, a senior magistrate decided that enough was enough, and agreed to the court displaying signs in both official

languages with the message, “No smoking within 10 metres of entrance”. This, along with large ash bins some 20 metres from the entrance, has at long last done the trick.

The effort required to rid the court of tobacco smoke pollution was enormous, and success was only possible because non-smoking court officials were determined that their workplace should be a healthy environment. Sheppard is modest about his own role in the achievement, which sets a helpful example for other courts in the country; but as he is a person for whom the word “persistent” might have been invented, we can be sure his frequent presence in the court in the course of his work was not unconnected.

## Sri Lanka: BAT uses religion, ousts quit charity scheme

In May, Ceylon Tobacco Company (CTC), the Sri Lankan subsidiary of BAT, organised the donation of alms to devotees celebrating Vesak (the birth, attainment of Buddhahood, and passing away of Buddha) at Ranmuthugala Buddhist temple. Its priests were also offered alms the following day by the country's President at his official residence, reportedly with CTC officials in attendance. Traditional Vesak lanterns made from cartons of CTC's Gold Leaf cigarettes were also seen at the temple. Ironically, they had been made by residents of a rehabilitation centre for victims of alcohol, tobacco, and heroine.



Entrance to the Mossel Bay Magistrates Court in South Africa, where smoking is now banned, with a sign saying in both official languages “No smoking within 10 metres of entrance”.